

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

District of Oregon

United States of America)

v.)

Case No. 3:22-MJ-00148

LEONARDO VERNAL PRADO)

Defendant(s)

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

BY TELEPHONE OR OTHER RELIABLE ELECTRONIC MEANS

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of July 23, 2022 in the county of Jackson in the
District of Oregon, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1);
 (b)(1)(A)(vi) and (viii)

Offense Description

Possession with intent to distribute controlled substances
 (methamphetamine and fentanyl)

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See the attached affidavit of DEA Special Agent Nicholas Kocher

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

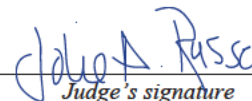
/s/ Signed by telephone

Complainant's signature

NICHOLAS KOCHER, Special Agent DEA

Printed name and title

Attested to by the applicant in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by
 telephone at 7:50 a.m./~~p.m.~~

Date: August 16, 2022


Judge's signature

City and state: Portland, Oregon

JOLIE A. RUSSO U.S. Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

DISTRICT OF OREGON, ss:

AFFIDAVIT OF NICHOLAS KOCHER

Affidavit in Support of a Criminal Complaint and Arrest Warrant

I, Nicholas Kocher, being duly sworn, do hereby depose and state as follows:

Introduction and Agent Background

1. I am a Special Agent with the Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”) and have been since February 2020. I am currently assigned to the DEA Seattle Field Division (SFD) Portland District Office (PDO). As a Special Agent of the DEA, I have participated in numerous drug investigations as either the lead case agent or as a supporting investigative agent, including in Title III wiretap investigations of violations of the Controlled Substances Act, Title 21, United States Code, Section 801, *et seq.* I have received specialized training from the DEA, to include a 19-week Basic Agent Training course and other training courses. I have been involved in conducting long-term, international and complex conspiracy investigations. Prior to my assignment to the PDO, I spent approximately four years in the 82nd Airborne Division as an Infantry Officer. I am familiar with investigations of Drug Trafficking Organizations (hereinafter, “DTOs”), including identifying methods of importation and distribution of controlled substances, and how controlled substances are manufactured, consumed, packaged, marketed, smuggled, and distributed. I am also familiar with various tactics used by DTOs to import drugs into the United States, communicate with members of the DTOs, and arrange for transportation and distribution of drugs.

2. I submit this affidavit in support of a criminal complaint and arrest warrant for **Leonardo Vernal Prado**, for the crime of Possession with Intent to Distribute a Schedule II controlled substance, fentanyl and methamphetamine, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) and (841(b)(1)(A)(vi) and (viii) (Target Offenses). As set forth below, there is probable cause to

believe, and I do believe, that **Leonardo Vernal Prado** violated the Target Offenses on July 23, 2022.

Applicable Law

3. Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1) makes it illegal to possess controlled substances with intent to distribute them. Possession within intent to distribute more than 400 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of fentanyl, and 500 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of methamphetamine is punishable by 10 years to life imprisonment, and a fine up to \$10,000,000. 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(a)(vi) and (viii).

Statement of Probable Cause

Background of the Investigation

4. In October 2021, DEA Portland began investigating a Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) suspected of distributing methamphetamine, heroin, and counterfeit oxycodone pills suspected to contain fentanyl, in Oregon and Washington, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) and 846. In the early stages of the investigation, investigators conducted controlled purchases of suspected methamphetamine, heroin, and counterfeit oxycodone pills from Emmanuel Malagon-Salinas and/or Francisco Moncada using government funds. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Included in this investigation are Emmanuel Malagon-Salinas, Francisco Moncada, Oscar De Aquino, Fabian Rosales, Michael Eads, William Piland, **Leonardo Vernal Prado** and other co-conspirators.

5. On April 15, 2022, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6. On May 17, 2022, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

7. On June 22, 2022, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

8. To date, investigators have seized approximately 48 pounds of counterfeit oxycodone pills suspected to contain fentanyl, three pounds of suspected heroin, 34 pounds of suspected methamphetamine, a small amount of suspected cocaine, 16 total firearms and have

arrested 12 defendants in the District of Oregon. These weights are gross pound weight which include packaging.

9. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

10. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

11. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

This affidavit is written in support of a complaint and federal arrest warrant for DTO member **Leonardo Vernal Prado (PRADO)**.

[REDACTED]

12. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

13. **Leonardo Vernal Prado (“PRADO”)**, Date of Birth (DOB): XX/XX/1999, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and is the user
of XXX-XXX-1346. **PRADO** is both a supplier of counterfeit oxycodone pills and
methamphetamine for the DTO.

July 13, 2022: [REDACTED]

14. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

15. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *tter*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

16.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

July 18, 2022: [REDACTED]

17. On July 18, 2022, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

18. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

19. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

20. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Based on my training and experience and the facts of this investigation, I know that when drug traffickers in Oregon commonly replenish their drug supply, they often times either travel to Southern California or surrounding border states such as Arizona or New Mexico, or have someone travel to those areas on their behalf in order to source a resupply of drugs. Southwest border states are a hub for illegal bulk-drug disbursement, given its proximity with Mexico where bulk quantities of drugs are manufactured, packaged and transported to California and other parts of the United States. This was further demonstrated by the geolocation data for Prado's Phone-1346 showing Prado's Phone-1346 was in the greater metropolitan area of Phoenix, Arizona [REDACTED]

July 22, 2022: [REDACTED]

21. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

22. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

*July 23, 2022: Investigators Seize Methamphetamine and
Counterfeit Oxycodone Pills from PRADO*

23. On July 23, 2022, at approximately 09:00 a.m., investigators established physical surveillance along Interstate 5, between Medford and Ashland, Oregon. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] investigators suspected **PRADO** to be returning to Oregon with controlled substances from Santa Maria, California.

24. At approximately 09:45 a.m., investigators identified a red Lincoln Navigator (Lincoln), California license plate 7TZN809, traveling northbound on Interstate 5, at approximately mile marker 30. The driver of the vehicle matched **PRADO**'s physical description. Based on a vehicle registration check, investigators learned the vehicle to be registered to Francisco Beazlopez out of Santa Maria, California. Geolocation information from Prado Phone-1346 was consistent with the travel patterns of the Lincoln.

25. At approximately 09:50 a.m., the Lincoln took exit 40 and turned west from the exit. Investigators observed the Lincoln at a gas station on the north west corner of the exit located at 9625 Old Stage Road, Central Point, Oregon 97502 - Dardanelles Store Gas & Diesel. The vehicle was waiting in line for a gas station attendant, facing west. At approximately 09:55, Investigators identified **PRADO** as the driver of the vehicle.

26. At approximately 10:06 a.m., Investigators watched two of occupants of the vehicle, **PRADO** and [REDACTED] get out of the car and stand next to the Lincoln. Investigators identified themselves as law enforcement, and detained both **PRADO** and

During the detention, Investigators, advised **PRADO** of his Miranda rights via a DEA-13a. **PRADO** verbally acknowledged his rights and agreed to speak with investigators. **PRADO** also provided verbal and written consent to search his vehicle. Investigators also located a third subject, [REDACTED] inside the store.

27. During the search of **PRADO's** vehicle, investigators located a large bag of suspected dried marijuana on the rear, passenger side floor and a bag of white crystalline substance consistent with methamphetamine in the driver's door of the Lincoln. **PRADO** told investigators he was the driver of the Lincoln and told investigators that there were drugs concealed on top of the vehicle. Investigators observed a package taped to the top of the SUV using red duct tape. Inside the taped portion, investigators located three bags of suspected methamphetamine and five small packages of suspected counterfeit oxycodone pills suspected to contain fentanyl. The suspected methamphetamine weighed approximately 4,456 gross grams and the suspected counterfeit oxycodone pills weighted approximately 672 gross grams. These

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weights include all packaging. Below are images of the concealed suspected methamphetamine and counterfeit oxycodone pills on the roof of the Lincoln:



After seizing the drugs found in and on top of the Lincoln, Investigators told **PRADO**, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] they were free to go. Investigators released all three men and the vehicle from the scene and continued their investigation. A sample of the methamphetamine later field tested positive for methamphetamine. The suspected fentanyl pills were not tested for officer safety reasons, and sent to a lab for further testing. Based on my training and experience, the facts of this investigation, and in consultation with other investigators I believe the pills contain fentanyl because the drugs did not appear to be packaged as pharmaceutical grade oxycodone, and nearly all the blue pills that other Portland based investigators and I have encountered in non-traditional packaging (i.e. wrapped in plastic bundles containing 100+ pills) that were tested at a certified laboratory have been determined to contain fentanyl.

August 15, 2022: Investigators Arrest PRADO

28. On August 15, 2022, Investigators took steps to find and arrest **PRADO** for the drugs he possessed on July 23, 2022. Investigators were monitoring geolocation data for Prado's Phone-1346 and observed the phone appear to be travelling north from California to Oregon. At approximately 12:50 p.m., investigators established physical surveillance in the Walmart Supercenter parking lot, located at 3615 Crater Lake Hwy, Medford, Oregon. Based on geolocation information for Prado Phone-1346, used in conjunction with the above-described West Coast narcotics trafficking trends, investigators suspected **PRADO** to be making another return trip from Santa Maria, California with controlled substances.

29. At approximately 12:55 p.m., investigators identified a black Ford F-150 (F-150), Washington license plate C61120X, parked in the rear of the Walmart parking lot near the Outback Steakhouse. Investigators saw **PRADO** sitting in the passenger side of the F-150 with the door open. Based on a vehicle registration check, investigators learned the vehicle to be registered to Rhandall Scott Cowley out of Vancouver, Washington. Geolocation information from Prado Phone-1346 was consistent with the static location of **PRADO** and later confirmed by **PRADO's** comments to investigators.

30. At approximately 1:00 p.m., Investigators contacted the occupants of the vehicle and detained **PRADO** and [REDACTED]. During the detention, investigators, advised both **PRADO** and [REDACTED] of their Miranda rights via a DEA-13a. **PRADO** and [REDACTED] verbally acknowledged their rights and agreed to speak with investigators. **PRADO** gave investigators consent to search the F-150 and told investigators that there was nothing present in the F-150 outside of marijuana.

PRADO told investigators they had been at the Walmart for some time waiting on money to be sent to him through a remitter service.

31. During the search of **PRADO**'s vehicle, investigators located two large bags of suspected dried marijuana, one from behind the drivers seat and one from behind the passenger seat. Investigators seized the suspected marijuana and arrested **PRADO**.

Conclusion

32. Based on the foregoing, I believe **PRADO** has committed the Target Offenses. Prior to being submitted to the Court, this affidavit, the accompanying complaint and the arrest warrant were all reviewed by Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) Paul Maloney, and AUSA Maloney advised me that in his opinion the affidavit and complaint are legally and factually sufficient to establish probable cause to support the issuance of the requested criminal complaint and arrest warrant.

Request for Sealing

33. It is respectfully requested that the Court issue an order sealing, until further order of the Court, all papers submitted in support of the requested criminal complaint and arrest warrant. I believe that sealing these documents is necessary because the information to be seized is relevant to an ongoing investigation, and any disclosure of the information at this time is likely

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to seriously jeopardize the ongoing investigation. Premature disclosure of the affidavit, the criminal complaint, and the arrest warrant may adversely affect the integrity of the investigation.

/s/ Sworn to by telephone

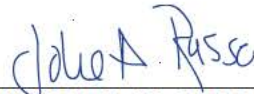
In accordance with Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1

Nicholas Kocher

Special Agent

August

Sworn to by telephone at 7:50 a.m./~~p.m.~~ this 16 day of ~~May~~ 2022 in
accordance with Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1.



HONORABLE JOLIE A. RUSSO

United States Magistrate Judge